

Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

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R 190733Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 837

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP IT

SUBJECT: BIDDING ON POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROJECTS

PASS COMMERCE

REF: A. ROME 4661, B. STATE 100247, C. STATE 3154

1. AMBASSADOR TOOK ADVANTAGE OF SEPT 17 COURTESY CALL ON THE NEW MINISTER OF POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS, TO RAISE QUESTION OF COLLINGS RADIO BID ON P AND T PROJECT FOR SWITCHING CENTERS.

2. EARLIER, COLLINGS HAD REQUESTED FURTHER EMBASSY INTERCESSION AS IT APPEARED THAT PANDT ASSURANCES GIVEN IN MAY, THAT COMPANY WOULD RECEIVE AT LEAST REASONABLE SHARE OF BID, WERE FADING. ALSO COLLINS IS PREPARED TO REDUCE SOMEWHAT ITS BID. COLLINS HAD ALSO PREPARED LETTERS REPLYING TO TECHNICAL POINTS RAISED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE WHEN IT REPLIED TO MAY 18 LETTER FROM AMBASSADOR.

3. IN MEETING WITH MINISTER TOGNI, AMBASSADOR WAS PREPARED TO

URGE HIM TO ALLOW COLLINS TO PRESENT ITS TECHNICAL CASE TO PT AUTHORITIES AND THUS RECEIVE FAIR AND IMPARTIAL HEARING. HOWEVER, MINISTER TOGNI HAD ALREADY DECIDED ON SIMILAR APPROACH IN LIGHT OF A LETTER OF SEPT 12 WHICH COLLINS HAD SENT TO HIM. (AMBASSADOR LEFT SIMILAR LETTER WITH MINISTER.)

4. P AND T MINISTER TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT IN LIGHT OF
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COLLINS REPRESENTATIONS, HE WAS ORDERING A FULL TECHNICAL INQUIRY

WITH THE RESULTS TO BE GIVEN PERSONALLY TO HIM. AS FAR AS HE IS CONCERNED, IF THE FACTS ARE AS STATED BY COLLINS HE IS PREPARED TO AWARD CONTRACT TO COMPANY. HOWEVER, AS HE KNEW AMBASSADOR WAS AWARE, THERE ARE POLITICAL ASPECTS TO CONTRACT, GIVEN ITS SIZE, THE FURTHER CONTRACTS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO RESULT FROM IT, AND THE FACT THAT THE PRINCIPAL COMPETITOR IS A VENTURE LED BY A STATE-CONTROLLED FIRM. THE MINISTER COULD NOT IGNORE THESE POLITICAL ASPECTS. NEITHER DID HE WISH TO GIVE THEM UNDUE WEIGHT, BUT HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS.

5. AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED TO TOGNI THAT FAILURE TO GIVE QUALIFIED AMERICAN COMPANY WITH MOST ADVANTAGES AND FULL CONSIDERATION COULD HAVE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES ON US SIDE AS WELL. HE THANKED THE MINISTER FOR HIS FAIRNESS IN INITIATING INQUIRY AND EXPRESSED HIS EXPECTATION THAT COLLINS WILL RECEIVE FULL CONSIDERATION.

6. AMBASSADOR CONVEYED SUBSTANCE FOREGOING TO ROBERT WILSON, PRESIDENT COLLINS RADIO, WHEN LATTER TELEPHONED FROM US SEPT 18. WILSON DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE OF PAST AND PRESENT EFFORTS.

7. COMMENT. IF PRESSURES GENERATED BY COMPETITION ARE SUCH AS TO WARRANT FURTHER EMBASSY INTERVENTION, AMBASSADOR WILL AGAIN RAISE MATTER WITH PRIME MINISTER AND, POSSIBLY, HIGHEST LEVEL OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT PARTY. VOLPE

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